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Gandhi's Nonviolence as a Cosmopolitan Political Thought

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Abstract

The concept of Nonviolence of M.K Gandhi is generally considered as a moral and political idea. It places him in the cosmopolitan tradition. Gandhi did not formulate any particular form of cosmopolitan theory. But Gandhi's convictions regarding biotic community in general and human community in particular has embedded his ideas into rooted cosmopolitan tradition. He was more cosmopolitan in his life practices. More specifically his practice of Ahimsa (nonviolence) connects him in a significant way to cosmopolitan political thought. From Gandhian point of view, nonviolence follows unity and interdependence of human life. The unity and interdependence is core to his notion of advaita (non-duality). Advaita is basic to nonviolence and cosmopolitanism. Gandhi's concept of nonviolence is based upon universal reciprocity. It is the interconnectedness of self and other. Gandhi's recognition of unity of humanity and self as a shared humanity proves his stronghold of the idea of cosmopolitanism. Gandhi's 'ashram' considered as a cosmopolitan community where he experimented philosophies like nonviolence. The harmonious existence of self and others in the 'ashram' develops cosmopolitan thinking. Gandhi thought individual above the state is the manifestation of cosmopolitan worldview. From cosmopolitan point of view nonviolence can be practised by the individual and by the state. For individual 'Satyagraha' is the mean of practicing nonviolence and for a state it is 'shared sovereignty'. Gandhi's nonviolence is a challenge to the violent nature of modern state. Sovereignty of the state was not acceptable to Gandhi. A nonviolent state only can be imagined through 'ethics of togetherness'. The ethics of togetherness is one of the cardinal feature of cosmopolitanism. Gandhian cosmopolitan political thought entails the synthesis of individual autonomy and nonviolent action. The present study locates Gandhi's nonviolence in broad area of cosmopolitanism.

Keywords: *Gandhi, nonviolence, cosmopolitanism, multiculturalism, self-other*

Introduction-

The twentieth century has witnessed incredible violence. Two World Wars, numerous regional conflicts, many civil strife and wars of national liberation were the historical account of the era. During this uncertain period, Gandhi became the major contributor to the philosophy of nonviolence. Over the past several decades, the idea of cosmopolitanism became highly influential in the field of political theory, political philosophy, sociology and literature. In political philosophy cosmopolitanism considered as a universal moral principle.

Dealing with cosmopolitanism is more normative in nature. One persistent challenge of the application of this universal moral principle is lack of motivation factor to support them. As a thought, it is more successful than as a theory. The lack of this ambassadorial motivation invites Gandhi to enter into the broad discussion.

Gandhi's idea of nonviolence has unlocked his cosmopolitan worldview. Violence which is considered now as a part of social life is commonly used by people to enforce wills over others. From a layman's perspective violence connotes power and nonviolence presages weakness and passivity. For Gandhi nonviolence requires more strength of character and more power. In twenty first century nonviolence stands a possibility and as a choice. Because we are living in a world of overlapping destinies and intertwined cultures. Nonviolence is very crucial now than ever in human history.

Gandhi and Cosmopolitan Nonviolence

Gandhi's nonviolence has a different meaning to different people. Gandhi used the term 'nonviolence' to bring out the root meaning of Ahimsa. The concept still acquiring new guises and constellations. Gandhi's nonviolence is based on innate humanity. Gandhi not only has theorised the concept of nonviolence he adopted it as a way of life. Nonviolence is not a weapon of the weak, it needs more courage and strength. According to Gandhi truth and nonviolence are two correlated terms. Gandhi said "There is no other God than Truth ... and the only means for the realization of Truth is Ahimsa ... a perfect vision of Truth can only follow a complete realization of Ahimsa" (Gandhi,1927, p.565). Gandhi had not used nonviolence for the first time. He "did raise nonviolent action to a level never before achieved" (Shepard, 2002, p.12). Jainism has its visible impact on Gandhi nonviolence. But Gandhi was not agreed upon the formulaic logic of their nonviolence. Gandhi's nonviolence was rooted in altruism and compassion for entire biotic community. Gandhi's nonviolence was also influenced by 'Sermon of the Mount'.

Gandhi claims two applicability of nonviolence. First is its cosmopolitan character; can be applied anywhere at any time. Second applicability concerns India. His Hindu version of nonviolence has no conflict global theories of nonviolence. Terchek (1998, p.204) argued that Gandhi complicates his own version of nonviolence to get a cosmopolitan one, because Gandhi considers his idea is not based on perfectionism. Again, Terchek argued, "when Gandhi talks about the unity of life, he means all biological life that he sees as part of the cosmos" (Terchek, 1998, p.204). As Gandhi puts it "my message and methods are, indeed, in their essentials for the whole world" (Gandhi quoted in Brown, 2008, p.14).

Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence is situated in his moral thought. It is the soul's force, "at the centre of nonviolence is a force which is self-acting" (Gandhi quoted in Johnson, 2006, p.124). According to Gandhi, nonviolence "is the greatest and the activist force in the world" (ibid). Gandhi said Ahimsa means love and Gandhi was influenced by St. Paul's definition of love. Again "Ahimsa includes the whole creation" (ibid), the cosmos and the biotic community. By explaining Ahimsa in its fullest sense and linking it to admiring it as a cosmopolitan idea, Gandhi enters into the broad debate of cosmopolitanism. Gandhi considered nonviolence as a "law of life for all human beings" (Gandhi quoted in Johnson, 2006, 123). Nonviolence is both a means and an end. Gandhi's philosophy of nonviolence was not developed in isolation. His nonviolence was a creative adaptation of different philosophies of nonviolence (Hardiman, 2003, p.58). The influence of

nonviolence is universal "concerning all levels of human interaction at all times and in all places" (Galtung, 1965, p.237).

During his stay at South Africa, Gandhi was challenged in various ways. Many opportunities exposed by cosmopolitan world made him redefine his almost every aspect of private and public life. Gandhi criticised Western notion of cosmopolitanism. Very consciously, Gandhi called this as a 'cosmopolitan imperial world.' Initially he tried to mould himself with cosmopolitan world, but soon realized that it is more imperial in nature. Gandhi preferred Indian version of cosmopolitanism. He considered nonviolence inherits from *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* is better than Western notion of cosmopolitanism. Gandhi's struggle for freedom striving for humanity was embodied cosmopolitan dream. It led the foundation for the post-colonial cosmopolis. Gandhi's idea of cosmopolitanism was a transpersonal idea, which includes all the humanity it follows no denomination.

"*Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*" an Indian Idea of Cosmopolitanism and Nonviolence

In ancient India the famous dictum *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* which means, 'the cosmos is one family' is also signifies the same idea of cosmos of Stoics. *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* is India's philosophy of the world. Search for peace in the world is supreme to this dictum. The feeling of oneness is paramount. Gandhi was mostly influenced by this *Vedantic* thought of ancient Indian scripture. Gandhi's *Ahimsa* (nonviolence) is considered as an extension of *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* (Kumar, 2002, p.3). Gandhi's concept of nonviolence is realized through the civilizational commitment *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam*. This intended to promote peace in the world.

Gandhi no longer consider as only an Indian leader who won political freedom for his own country; he is regarded as an ambassador world peace. *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* was an integral part of it. In the best sense Gandhi was a 'citizen of the world' (Narayan & Sethi, 2018, p.19). Gandhi thought that the different societies were held together by nonviolence just like earth by the law of gravitation. Every society is governed by "principle of interdependence, cooperation, dedication towards duty, and enjoys the same respect, social status, and importance" (Kujur, 2001, p.89).

Many scholars confused with globalisation as a project of cosmopolitanism. But cosmopolitanism has a critical distance from globalisation. Globalisation came with more exploitation and injustice; this could be the view of M.K Gandhi on globalisation. At last globalisation is not Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam (Kumar, 2002, p.vii). Fred Dallmayr argued that "Cosmopolitanism and globalization are closely connected and on some level overlapping; but they are not synonyms" (Dallmayr, 2012, p.173). *Ahimsa Paramodharma* and *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* are two tenets of nonviolence (Jha, 2012, p.37).

***Satyagraha* and Cosmopolitan Nonviolence**

Key to Gandhi's nonviolence is '*satyagraha*' or 'truth force'. A satyagrahi is a cosmopolite who urges for autonomy, dignity and equality for everyone. The essential cosmopolitan nature of Gandhi's satyagrahi is that "what happens to any person is important to everyone because we are all interrelated" (Terchek, 1998, p.180). This suggests the interdependence and interconnectedness of humankind. Role of nonviolence is overstressed in satyagraha. According to Gandhi satyagraha is the unique weapon to fight injustice in the world. His

struggle for oppression were realized in other parts of the world, especially in South Africa and in United States. His formative years in South Africa transformed him and eventually broadened his outlook into a more cosmopolitan struggle for human rights (Desai & Vaheed, 2015). Out of Gandhi's humanistic and cosmopolitan political philosophy of satyagraha grew. In 1907, Gandhi started his first satyagraha campaign in Johannesburg. The campaign began as a protest against the Asiatic Registration Bill of 1906, which attempts to limit the number of Indians in Transvaal.

The oxymoronic ideology of nonviolence framed Gandhi's activism in South Africa. He is both cosmopolitan and local. Gandhi said his Satyagraha is "a universal force necessarily makes no distinction between kinsmen and strangers" (Gandhi, 1930). Gandhi saw real face of racial discrimination in South Africa. By fighting this discrimination, Gandhi introduced a new spirit to the world. Satyagraha was the centre of Gandhi's contribution to the philosophy of ahimsa. Martin Luther Jr would call it 'love in action.' Gene Sharp defined satyagraha as "Gandhian nonviolence" (Basebang, 2010, p.37). In Gandhi's Satyagraha is inseparable from nonviolence.

Nonviolence and Cosmopolitan Justice

Nonviolence refers to a means for collective struggle against injustice of any kind. Gandhi consider nonviolent action is the only form of resistance. The concept of nonviolence urges to continue struggling on behalf of right and justice. At a time when clash of nations on the basis of national interest, ethnic prejudice and religious fundamentalism, Gandhi's nonviolence came up with a new 'cosmopolitics'[1]. This Gandhian quest for justice promised and promoted human rights and nonviolent militancy. It is the foundation to the international civil society. Ramin Jahanbegloo argued that:

> Non-violence has recently evolved from a simple tactic of resistance to a cosmopolitical aim based on international application of the principles of democracy. Over the past three decades, global terrorism, violation of human rights and environmental degradation have caused repercussions highlighting the concern for global politics of non-violence… the international community has the moral obligation and duty to intervene in countries if they slide into lawlessness and can't protect citizens from violations of human rights. (Jahanbegloo, 2008, n.d).

Nonviolent cosmopolitics is the needed to promote inter-cultural and inter-religious harmony. Many scholars argued that multiculturalism could be a choice. But somewhere multiculturalism lacks the interconnectedness. Multiculturalism preserves inherent difference between cultures but cosmopolitanism tried to bridging them. Multiculturalism agreed upon collectivism but is not accepts shared equality (Beck, 2011). Multiculturalism automatically concedes division and cosmopolitanism automatically accepts concession to tolerance.

Gandhi sees state completely relying on coercion. The structure of modern state is based on hierarchy. Gandhi termed it as a 'soulless machine.' But Gandhi was well aware that a mechanism is needed to fight with institutional injustices like untouchability. Standards of justice are very specific; for example, Aristotelian distributive justice, Lockean right as a reflection of justice Marxian classless just society. Every conception of justice has its own formulation of injustice. But Gandhi's conception of justice is based on nonviolent

[1] Cosmopolitics can be defined as the nature of universal politics or world politics.

action. Gandhi criticized those who resorting violent means in their march to a just future. In the same line Gandhi criticized Indian nationalists who does not recognized to the injustices of their own. Concentrating on justice Gandhi constraints the use of violence. According to Gandhi injustices are perceptible and observable. Justice might be imagined, where philosophers were preoccupied with the imagination of final victory of justice (Terchek, 1998, p.165-166).

Nationalism and Gandhi's Vernacular Cosmopolitanism.

As we have discussed previously, that cosmopolitanism deals with the idea of polity on world basis considers nationalism as a lower-level attachment. Again, it considers nationalism as a form of divisive prejudice. Because in cosmopolitanism world peace will prevail through toleration but nationalism prevails through narcissism and intolerance (Armigate, 2017). Modern cosmopolitanism is anti-nationalism by its virtue of pacifism. The urge for human freedom cannot be attain within the framework of narrow nationalism. Gandhi was critical of Western concept of nationalism because of its aggressive tilt.

Gandhi's view on nationalism has not been adequately explored. If someone search the word 'nationalism' in his collected writings, the usage suggests that Gandhi had no fascination for nationalism. He always focused on the cultural side of nationalism rather than the statist. Gandhi's nationalism was a non-statist kind of thing. His nationalism is more coexist with other. Gandhi said:

Nationalism or my idea of nationalism is that my country may become free, that if need be the whole of the country may die, so that the human race may live. There is no room for race hatred there. Let that be our nationalism (Gandhi quoted in Misra, 2005, p.59).

Gandhi's nationalism includes all humanity in general. It is not the powerful drive to dominate others; it is not an urge to have one's own nation at the cost of others. Gandhi has systematically developed a critique of contemporary nationalism (Rai, 2017). The horizon of Gandhi's nationalism is very assimilative and tolerant in the other hand it can be called "accommodative nation" (ibid). Gandhi said:

The individual has to die for the family, the family has to die for the village, the village for the district, the district for the province, and the province for the country, even so a country has to die, if necessary, for the benefit of the world (Gandhi quoted in Kripalani, 1958, p.115).

According to Gandhi the bane of modern state are narrowness, selfishness and exclusiveness. Gandhi said my goal is "Friendship with the whole world and I can combine the greatest love with the greatest opposition to wrong" again he said "God never made these frontiers" (ibid, 116).

The principle of nonviolence is necessary to abstain from exploitation of any form. The nonviolence of Gandhi brought together the idea cosmos, duties, autonomy and power. Terchek argued that:

This will occur on his account not because India has its own flag, army, and centralized state which exercises an unlimited sovereignty over citizens but because all Indians treat, each other with equal regard and respect, are able to subdue necessity, and see themselves related in a cosmos (Terchek, 1998, p.140-141).

From the perspective of autonomy, Gandhi opines both the whole and parts must be free and there should be interdependence and cooperation between the same. The ways to pursue autonomy must be nonviolent. Ganguly (2007, p.247) has cited two idioms of non-European cosmopolitanism—nonviolence as hybridized Hindu life-practice and democratic development as non-hierarchical Buddhist orientation to life. One represents Gandhi and the other one represents Ambedkar. Gandhi's views on nationalism have not adequately explored. But his notion of cosmopolitanism can be termed as 'vernacular cosmopolitanism'. Vernacular cosmopolitanism correlates the contradictory notions of "local specificity and universal enlightenment" (Werbner, 2006, p.496). Both the notions are visible in Gandhi's cosmopolitanism.

Pacifism and Cosmopolitanism

There is no doubt that cosmopolitanism is a philosophy of peace. The values of cosmopolitanism are directed towards reducing and preventing conflicts. Gandhi had a stanch commitment to establish a nonviolent order. Gandhi's nonviolence sprung out from *Ahimsa Paramodharma* and *Vasudhaiva Kutumbakam* which means complete freedom from hatred, ill-will and to cultivate love for entire biotic community (Jha, 2012, p.37). Cosmopolitanism prohibits war worldwide. Cosmopolitanism in a Gandhian sense have an intuition that human beings are peaceful by nature. This intuition brings equal treatment for all as a part of universal human right.

Cosmopolitanism advocates the idea of world peace. It emphasized the unity of humankind over the shared national boundaries. In Aristotelian line, it said that humans are sociable by nature. Immanuel Kant an enlightened cosmopolitan philosopher argued that world peace is possible by establishing a voluntary league of states. Hospitality and human rights are key to Kant's cosmopolitanism (Kant, 1903). Kant was the first systematic cosmopolitan philosopher to argue about perpetual peace. The main objective of contemporary cosmopolitanism is to bring about the substantive idea of polity, which constructed on a world basis rather on the basis of territoriality. Cosmopolitanism considers humans as rational and autonomous agents. It allows consensual settlement of all disputes. To prevent potential conflicts equality among individuals is necessary.

The peace for Gandhi is not simply the 'absence of war' it is also implies justice and equality. Today the focus of all peace efforts has already been shifted to territorial basis of human security. The focus should be on 'perpetual peace.' Long before Gandhi, Kant advocated the need of the conditions of permanent peace. In contemporary era, the focus is on making treatise between republican states to maintain peace without adhering nonviolence (Gupta, n.d). Gandhi's notion of peace centred on nonviolence, soul force and forgiveness.

Conclusion

The time has come to renew the commitment of cosmopolitanism by keeping nonviolence in mind. As Gandhi said, "There is no hope for the aching world except through the narrow and straight path of non-violence" (Gandhi, 2007, p.92) After 150th birth anniversary of M.K Gandhi we face a choice that is called nonviolence.

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